

CCME Press Release of 27th August 2009

Swedish Migration Minister: "EU Refugee resettlement programme has to result in a substantial increase of the resettlement quota"

CCME conference discusses details of "the road ahead" for EU resettlement scheme

A European conference convened by the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) in Stockholm-Sigtuna discusses until Friday the 28th August 2009 the process "towards the common EU resettlement scheme". During the conference opening on 25th August, the Swedish Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy, Tobias Billström called for an increased commitment of EU Member States to resettling refugees. The conference, which is a cooperation of CCME with the Church of Sweden, the Swedish Christian Council and the Sigtuna Foundation, takes place during the first working weeks of the Swedish EU Council Presidency and a week prior to the adoption of a proposal for an EU resettlement scheme by the European Commission.

In his opening statement Minister Billström set out the ambition of his government to prioritise resettlement during its EU Presidency. He also called for a clear distinction between resettlement of refugees from third countries to the EU and recent ideas concerning a "relocation" mechanism, by which refugees and asylum seekers would be transferred between EU member states.

During the conference opening, which was attended by some 90 participants from some 15 EU member states, the UN's Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees, Erika Feller underlined the importance of refugee resettlement. "Resettlement matters" Feller said "for the refugees, for the community, for the host countries, but also receiving countries". Against this background, the international community was placing high hopes in increased EU efforts to protect refugees through refugee resettlement.

The Vice President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security, Jacques Barrot expressed his wish to "congratulate CCME for organising this conference on resettlement of refugees in Europe". In his message to the conference Barrot underlined: "European citizens (need to) feel able to support these programmes of resettlement. And of course the churches have an essential role to play". "They can educate people's minds and activate their hearts" he added.

Note to editors:

Refugee resettlement is the process by which refugees who have to flee their home country and find initial, but insufficient or temporary protection in another country, are resettled into a third country and find permanent protection and a durable, sustainable solution there. While around one hundred thousand refugees are annually resettled to the US, Canada and Australia, resettlement is since the 1960ies scarcely used in Europe: currently only eight EU member states regularly carry out resettlement, resettling around 4.000 refugees annually. The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) is since 2004 actively promoting resettlement as an additional tool for refugee protection in Europe.

The full text of the speech of Minister Billström can be found at:

<http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/11553/a/130510>

The English transcript of the message of Commissioner Barrot can be found at:

<http://www.skr.org/download/18.7cf9c5aa121e17bab42800047118/Microsoft+Word+-+Barrot.pdf>

CCME has published "12 Arguments and 7 Proposals for the EU Resettlement Scheme" on 29 June 2009. These are available at:

<http://www.ccme.be/secretary/NEWS/090629%20RR%20CCME%20considerations%20and%20recommendations%20EU%20RR%20scheme%20FINAL.pdf>

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The views expressed and information provided by the project and the partners involved do not necessarily reflect the point of view of the European Commission and do in no way fall under the responsibility of the European Commission.

The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) is the ecumenical agency on migration and integration, asylum and refugees, and against racism and discrimination in Europe. Members are Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant Churches and Councils of Churches as well as church-related agencies across Europe. CCME formally cooperates with the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches.